

THE
Nature *and* Consequences
OF
ENTHUSIASM

Consider'd, in some short
REMARKS
ON THE
Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity
Stated and Defended.

IN
A LETTER to Mr. TONG,
Mr. ROBINSON, Mr. SMITH,
and Mr. REYNOLDS.

By a Protestant Dissenter.

L O N D O N :

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I have the Pleasure to acquaint you
 with the Author of the following
 down, or the Conclusion you have drawn
 from them. I shall therefore be obliged
 to you to send me the Book, or
 to send me the Title, that you have sent
 me to think that you have sent
 me the Book of the Pious
 Mens Conscience, and the Salvation of
 Souls. I am, Sir, your most
 Obedient Servant,

Mr. Tong, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Smith,
 and Mr. Reynolds.

GENTLEMEN,



WHEN I saw the Doctrine
 of the Blessed Trinity Sta-
 ted and Defended, under
 your Names, advertised
 in our publick News Pa-
 pers, the Importance of
 the Subject, and an earn-
 est Desire of having my
 Judgment fully settled in this Point, made
 me very impatient to see the Book. I thought
 the least that could reasonably be expected
 from such a Combination of able Pens, was,
 to see the Question clearly Stated, and fair-
 ly Argued, the most material Objections
 Obviated, and the Whole set in a dis-
 tinct and proper Light. But having now

considered and examined what you have offered upon this Head, with all the Application and Exactness I am capable of, I must own, that I find my self somewhat disappointed; and that I cannot at all satisfy my Understanding concerning the Truth of some General Principles you have laid down, or the Conclusions you have drawn from them. I shall therefore take the Liberty to offer you some of those Reasons, which, till you can inform me better, must incline me to think, that you have laid the great Stress of Christianity, the Peace of Mens Consciences, and the Salvation of Souls, upon a mere precarious Foundation, which is not at all sufficient to support such a Weight; that you cannot your selves, upon your own Principles, have any rational Confidence towards God; and that those serious and plain Christians, to whom you appeal, and for whose Sake only you have written this Book, must either lay aside their Reason and Understandings in the great Articles of their Faith, and content themselves to believe implicitly as the Church believes, or else be left under endless and inextricable Doubts and Perplexities about their Spiritual State, and the Salvation of their Souls; since you have pinn'd them down under the Penalty of eternal Damnation, or at least as they expect any Covenant Mercy from God, to the Belief of a Point, which, upon a fair Enquiry, they must in all Probability find, to be extremely Doubtful at least, if not utterly Repugnant, not only to the Nature
and

and Reason of Things, but to the plain repeated Declarations of God in the Christian Revelation.

That I may not omit any Thing that is material in so remarkable a Performance, I shall begin with your *Title-Page*; and here, by *The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity Stated and Defended*, I presume you mean only your own Judgment, or Opinion, Stated and Defended, concerning the Sense of Scripture, as it relates to the Doctrine of the Trinity: I have, as I imagine, sufficient Reason to take this for granted, since 'tis certain that as Protestants, or even as fallible Creatures, you can mean nothing else by it. But whether you mean so or no, I think it will be the more necessary here, to distinguish between your Opinion, or Sense of Scripture, and Scripture it self; because otherwise, as you have managed the Matter, I fear, that not a Few of your too easy and believing Readers might be in great Danger of mistaking the One for the Other, and of substituting, without more ado, your Judgment or Sense of Scripture, in the Place and Stead of Scripture it self.

Indeed were Men Infallible in their Judgments, and known to be so, there would be no Need of distinguishing between their Sense of Scripture, and Scripture it self, because their Sense in that Case must necessarily be the true Sense; but where they are not thus Infallible, it is very unfair, and very presuming, to write as if they were. I would be as tender as possible of charging you with any Thing that
you

you are not plainly Guilty of ; and the setting up for Infallibility in Matters of Faith, must appear with so ill a Grace in Protestants, and especially in Protestant Dissenters, that I hope you will be able and ready to clear your selves from any such Imputation ; only, I could wish that you had not made such a Vindication necessary, or that you had not in any Case laid your selves open to the ill Consequences of a supposed Infallibility.

I shall not insist upon your positive and dogmatical Way of Writing, as if you were as certain of what you are contending for, as you are that the Sun is up at Noon Day ; nor shall I urge against you, your not once supposing or allowing that you may possibly be mistaken in this Case, and therefore, that it would not be safe for serious plain Christians absolutely to depend upon you ; but that they ought with the utmost Impartiality, and with equal Fairness and Indifferency, to consider and weigh the Evidence on both Sides, seeking Truth only, for its own Sake, without regarding whether the Weight of Humane Authority, or any of the Interests or Advantages of this World, be for or against it. Certainly such an Acknowledgment, and such Advice, at least Once for All, had been but open and ingenuous in Those, who did not pretend to be Infallible. But what I would now take Notice of, and make some Remarks upon, is, that you seem to me directly to claim Infallibility in Matters of Faith, only you have softened

it a little by giving it another Name; your Words are these, p. 5. ' We are far from pretending to an Infallible Judgment about Gospel Truth and Error; but we take it to be an agreed Point with Protestants, that there may be Certainty, where there is not Infallibility; and None can deny this, unless they will venture to assert, that we can in no Case know we are in the Right, but by being assured that it is impossible for us, in any Case, to be in the Wrong.' This I think must be allow'd to pass for a very peculiar and remarkable Piece of Reasoning; for,

1. Here is Infallibility Claim'd and Disclaim'd, Asserted and Deny'd: You are far from pretending to an Infallible Judgment about Gospel Truth and Error; and yet you pretend to Knowledge or Certainty in those Matters, which is the highest Degree of Evidence that Humane Understandings are capable of; and therefore, if you are not Infallible so far as your Knowledge or Certainty goes, it is impossible you should ever be Infallible at all.

2. Here is a General Principle laid down, a Point which all Protestants are supposed to be agreed in, that there may be Certainty where there is not Infallibility; but this being to my Understanding, a plain Contradiction, I shall never believe that all Protestants are agreed in it, till I have better Authority for it. The whole World is agreed that there may be Certainty, strict Infallible Certainty in Matters of Science; but they must be very weak Protestants, if there are any such, who talk of Cer-

Certainty in Matters of Faith ; you cannot be certain of any Thing at all, if you are not infallibly certain of it, and if you pretend to infallible Certainty in Matters of Faith, or Opinion, I hope you will not disclaim Infallibility in those Matters ; but if it is only a fallible or uncertain Certainty that you claim in this Case, you may take it with all my Heart, and I wish you much Good of it ; be as fallibly Infallible, and as uncertainly Certain as you please ; this is a Privilege, which tho' it may not perhaps expose you to much Envy, yet I cannot engage for it, that it will not expose you to some Ridicule.

3. And which is stranger still, if possible, it is said, that None can deny (this Contradiction) that there may be Certainty where there is not Infallibility, unless they will assert (another Contradiction) that Men cannot be Certain or Infallible in some Cases, without being so in all ; or that no Man can be Infallible in any Case, without being absolutely and in all Cases beyond the Possibility of Error. By what Force of Magick you have drawn this Consequence, you have not informed us, and perhaps 'tis a Mystery which you cannot, and therefore in Prudence will not explain ; or possibly it might not consist with your designed Brevity, and so you have reserved it for your next. But be this as it will, I think it is evident that Infallibility must go as far as Certainty, and that no Man can be certain of any Thing at all, of which he is not infallibly certain. If you intend to disclaim Infallibility only in this Sense, Infallibility in every Thing, or
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an Impossibility of erring in any Case at all, the Pope and Church of *Rome* never pretended to such an Infallibility ; nay, the Apostles themselves were not infallible in this Sense, they were not infallible in every thing, or above a possibility of Error in all Cases whatever ; we find *St. Paul* sometimes giving his Advice only, without pretending to an absolute Certainty, or infallible Judgment in the Case ; at other Times we find the Apostles differing in their Judgments, and debating several Matters among themselves, which could not consist with absolute Certainty, or Infallibility, in those Cases ; and indeed in many Instances the Apostles themselves were plainly left to act upon the common Principles of Humane Prudence, and the Appearances of Probability only, without that absolute Certainty, or Infallibility, which they had in other Cases ; they were doubtless Infallible in whatever they delivered as the Mind and Will of God concerning Mens Duty, and the Way and Means of Salvation : And this is all the Infallibility which the *Romanists* pretend to, an Infallibility in declaring what is, or is not, a Matter of Faith, or necessary to Salvation ; and I cannot see that you are inclined to yield an Inch to his Holiness in this Point, but that in whatever you think fit to declare as a necessary Article of Faith, or necessary to Salvation, you are as Infallible as the Pope himself ; you have disclaim'd no Infallibility, but an universal unlimited Infallibility in every Thing, or an absolute Freedom from Error, or any

Liableness to Error in all Cases whatever; an Infallibility which was never pretended to, which never was nor can possibly be communicated to Men, but is peculiar to God alone.

Thus you have, in great Humility and Condescension, given up the Claim of a divine Attribute, and vouchsafed to divest your selves of the Infallibility of God; but you stand hard by the Infallibility of the Pope; a strict, absolute, or indubitable Certainty in Matters of Faith, is your great and main Principle: This Certainty in Matters of Faith, Opinion, or Perswasion, this immovable Confidence, or invincible Adherence to a Thing beyond its just Degree of rational objective Evidence, which is the great Foundation and last Refuge of all Bigottry and Enthusiasm, you hold as fast as your Integrity, and will not let it go. Now tho' I cannot conceive how God himself should make a Man more infallible in his Judgment in any Case, than by imparting to him the certain Knowledge of the Thing; it being, I think, impossible that the Humane Understanding should be more Infallible than Knowledge or Certainty can render it, yet I will not contend much with you about a Name; and therefore, if you do not like the Sound of Infallibility, I shall substitute your own Words instead of it, *viz.* Knowledge or Certainty in Matters of Faith; and as I think that these are the same Thing, so I am sure that all the natural necessary Consequences of either must be exactly the same;

same ; and tho' in a loose and popular Way of speaking, Men may confound Knowledge with Belief or Persuasion, Certainty with Probability, yet in strict Reasoning or Argument we ought always to distinguish them, both in their Nature and Consequences, or otherwise we must unavoidably confound the Nature and Reason of Things.

Every Proposition, or whatever can be objectively proposed to the Understandings of Men, as the Matter of their Assent or Dissent, must be Self-evident, Demonstrative, or Probable only. Where the Relation of Agreement or Disagreement between any two Ideas is perceived by an immediate Juxta-Position of the Ideas themselves; as that twice Two is Four, or that the Whole is equal to all its Parts taken together, and the like, the Proposition is Self-evident, or Intuitive. When the Relation of Agreement or Disagreement between any two remote Ideas, is discovered by a Train of intermediate Ideas, each Antecedent having an immediate self-evident Connexion with its next subsequent Idea, so as that the first and last Step in the whole Chain of Reasoning shall be join'd together by a Train of Intuitive or Self-evident Preceptions ; in this Case the Proposition will be demonstrative, as being founded upon strict Mathematical Evidence ; that is, the Proposition in either of these Cases will be necessarily true, and the contrary absolutely impossible in the Nature and Reason of Things. This intuitive and demonstrative Evidence is the sole Foundation of

Knowledge or Certainty ; and whatever comes short of this can amount only Probability, and can lay a rational Foundation for no more than Opinion, Belief, or Persuasion, in which, how high soever the Degrees of Probability may rise, we cannot conclude the Thing to be necessarily true, but the contrary will be still possible: There will be always this essential Difference between Certainty and Probability, Knowledge and Belief, or Opinion, that where there is the one, the Thing must be necessarily true; whereas the other still leaves the Matter in some degree doubtful, and must always suppose the Possibility of the contrary. The confounding of these Things, so different in themselves, the pretending to Knowledge or Certainty in Matters which are incapable of such Evidence, and mistaking the Strength of Persuasion for the Certainty and Evidence of the Thing, is the proper Nature of Enthusiasm: For all that Strength of Persuasion, which goes beyond the rational objective Evidence of Things to the Understanding, is usually attributed to some divine Impulse, or to the internal Witness and Testimony of the Spirit to the Heart and Conscience.

When once a Man is well settled in such a Persuasion, when once he comes to think that he must not see but feel the Truth, or that he must not see with his Understanding, but with something else, he is got above the Force of Argument, or rational Conviction; you will in vain endeavour to shew him the Insufficiency of his Principles,

or

or the Weakness and Inconsequence of his Reasonings; for he has God himself speaking inwardly to his Soul, striking him with irresistible Conviction, preventing his Faculties, and forcing his Assent by a supernatural, overwhelming Light. If you tell him you are not able to perceive the necessary Truth, or so much as the Probability of what he pretends to know, and be so certain of; that is, he will say, because you have not the Spirit of God; or because you lean too much to your own Understanding, and judge of Things by your carnal, corrupted Reason; but that he has the Spirit witnessing with his Spirit that he is actually in the right; his Understanding and Reason are enlightened, refined and spiritualized, and therefore he can see plainly the Truth and Necessity of what may appear absolutely false, impossible, and contradictory to carnal Reason. If you urge him farther, that you hope you have been sincere in your Inquiries; that Truth, the Honour of God, and the Salvation of Souls are Things infinitely dear to you, and that as far as you know any thing of your own Hearts, you are ready to sacrifice all that you have in the World to them; that you are sensible of the Weakness of your Understandings, and how liable you are to Error, and therefore with your diligent, laborious and painful Studies, you have always join'd the most earnest Prayers to God, that he would guide and direct you by his Spirit, lead you into all necessary Truth, and not leave you under any dangerous

gerous Error ; and consequently, that you cannot but hope that if you should after all be mistaken, God will mercifully pity your Weakness, accept of your sincere Endeavours to know and do his Will, and not condemn you eternally for an invincible Error ; the Enthusiast would reply to you, if not in plain Words, at least by Innuendo's, that all this is mere Pretext and Sham, that you pretend a Love of Truth, the Glory of God, and the like, only to carry on some vile, wicked Design or other ; that he for his Part is certainly in the right, he knows and is sure of it, as having the Truth witnessed to his Conscience by the infallible Testimony of the Spirit ; and therefore if you were indeed sincere, as you pretend, if you had really the Spirit of God, and were not Rebribates, you must needs see, and think, and feel as he does : And now I suppose the Man has pinn'd you down, and you can stand no longer against him ; for there is no Force of Reasoning can prevail against the Weight and Strength of Enthusiasm. I wish, Gentlemen, you had not treated this Subject in such a Manner, as to give the World occasion to suspect that you come at the Knowledge and Certainty you pretend to, only in the Enthusiastick Way.

This visionary Scheme cannot but be attended with two very ill Consequences, which I never knew it fail of producing in Fact, Implicit Faith and Uncharitable Zeal. As to the first of these, it is certain, that all that Strength of Perswasion which goes beyond

yond the apprehended Evidence of Things, must be Implicit Faith, and can have no rational Foundation at all; for when a Man is well settled in his Enthusiasm, and sufficiently heated with a mysterious Fire, he may work himself up to a strong Perswasion, not only without, and beyond, but even contrary to all rational Evidence whatever; of which we have a sufficient Proof in the far greater Part of the Christian World, who upon this very Account have been wrought into the Belief of the grossest Absurdity, and most complicated Contradiction that could ever have been thought of, or imposed upon the Understandings of Men: And tho' the pretended Necessity of believing what appears not to be not only wholly unintelligible, but contradictory also, is the sole Principle upon which the Belief of *Transubstantiation* it self is founded, yet this is still a Principle among Protestants; in consequence whereof, if they are not actually, they are liable at least to be as much imposed on as Papists.

It will be sufficient to expose this Effect of Enthusiasm, barely to represent it in its own Light; and this will be done only by stating the Notion, or giving the Definition of Faith; Faith then, or Belief, as every one knows, is an Assent of the Understanding to the Truth of a Proposition, upon the Testimony of a Person, or Persons, whose Credit and Veracity may reasonably be depended on. Before we can believe therefore, or yield a rational Assent to the Truth of any Proposition, upon the Testimony

mony of another, our Understanding must be satisfy'd in two Things ; first, that it is indeed testify'd by that other, whose Authority is vouch'd for it, and that it is not a mere Imposition, or Forgery ; secondly, We must understand the Sense or Meaning of the Proposition, or be able to affix in our own Minds some settled, determin'd Ideas to the several Terms of it, before one can believe it upon Testimony, or employ any Act of the Mind at all about it, unless it is barely suspending one's Judgment concerning it ; for the Assent of the Understanding, whether it proceeds upon certain or probable Reasons, divine or humane Testimony, or any thing else, being only the joining or separating of Ideas in Affirmative or Negative Propositions, as the Things themselves are supposed to agree or disagree ; 'tis certain that we cannot thus join or separate Ideas in Propositions of which we have no Ideas at all ; that is, we cannot believe or disbelieve what we have no Notion or Conception of : And indeed Faith or Belief, in the Enthusiastick Account of it, must be defin'd to be, an Assent of the Understanding to what one cannot understand, and the joining or separating of Ideas in mere verbal Propositions, where we have no Ideas at all.

This being evidently so, it may be worth while to examine the Pleas of Enthusiasm, for the Belief of Mysterious or unintelligible Propositions : It is commonly urged therefore by the Patrons of an implicate, incomprehensible Faith ; 1st, That the
Scripture

Scripture it self, represents the great Doctrines of the Christian Revelation, under the Notion of Mysteries. 2d. That tho' we cannot believe any thing contrary to Reason, yet we may and ought to believe many Things which are above Reason, or beyond our Comprehension. 3d. That there are in Fact, infinite Things in Nature, which we cannot understand, and which we are obliged to believe. A clear Answer to these Objections, will, I presume, set this Matter in a full Light, and either reconcile the contending Parties, or leave one Side to contend only for Contention sake.

To the 1st therefore, that the Scripture it self represents the great Doctrines of the Christian Revelation under the Notion of Mysteries; and consequently that we must believe Mysteries, or not believe the Scriptures; I say, that a Mystery, in the Scripture Notion of it, signifies something that depends so intirely on a Divine Testimony, that it could never have been known or discovered by Humane Reason, if God himself had not discovered or made it known by a particular Revelation in an extraordinary Way; and in this Sense the whole Gospel Revelation is call'd a *Mystery*, the *Mystery of Godliness*, because it contains Things which were absolutely beyond the Search or Investigation of unassisted Natural Reason, and could never have been understood without Revelation; but then, I say, that when once a Thing is revealed, or made known, it ceases to be a Mystery,

for it cannot continue to be a Mystery, a Secret or an unknown Thing, after it is revealed or made known. Thus St. Paul says, *Behold I shew you a Mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye, at the last Trump; for the Trumpet shall sound, and the Dead shall be raised Incorruptible, and we shall be changed,* 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. What the Apostle here discovers, was a Secret, a hidden or unknown Thing before, and must have continued so without a Revelation, and therefore he calls it a *Mystery*; but if it was to have remain'd a Mystery after he had revealed it, he could not have said as he does, *Behold I shew*, or make it known to you; and indeed it must be a strange sort of a Revelation, which leaves the Thing as much a Mystery as before; at this Rate every thing might be revealed, and nothing made known. Perhaps it will be urged by Those who are for the Belief of Mysteries, that what the Apostle here reveals, is revealed but in Part, that the Thing still remains in Part mysterious, for we know not how or after what Manner this Change will be made, or what sort of Incorruptible Bodies These will be; to which the Answer is easy, That we are to believe a Thing only so far as it is revealed, and as to the still mysterious or unrevealed Part, as we know nothing of it, so we can believe nothing about it; that the Bodies of Those who shall be found alive at the Last Day, will be suddenly changed, and that this Change will render them Incorruptible, is what is revealed

revealed to our Understandings, and this we believe, as what Revelation has made plain and intelligible enough; but after what Manner this Change will be made, or what particular sort or kind of Incorruptible Bodies These will be, as it is not at all revealed, as we have no Ideas of it, and know nothing about it, so it cannot possibly be the Object of our Faith: So that a Man's Faith must still keep Pace with his Understanding, and cannot move an Hair's-Breadth beyond it; and what goes farther, must be a blind implicit Faith, a mere mechanical Impulse, Enthusiasm, or a strong Persuasion without any rational Grounds, But,

2d. It is said, that tho' we cannot believe any thing contrary to Reason, yet we may and ought to believe many Things which are above our Reason. Now if by Things above Reason, here, be meant Things which can be known only by Revelation, it is very true that we are obliged to believe many Things upon the Score of Revelation, which Reason could never have reach'd to without it; but then, I say, that those Things which are in this Sense above Reason, as depending wholly upon Revelation, must, by the Revelation it self, be brought down to our Understandings, and Capacities, so as to enable us to form some clear consistent Notions and Conceptions of them: But if by Things above Reason, be meant Things wholly Incomprehensible, or Things of which we can have no distinct Notion or Preception at all, I say it will

be as absurd and impossible in this Sense, to believe Things above Reason, as it is to believe what is contrary to Reason; for nothing, I think, can be more unreasonable, or contrary to Reason, than to require a Man to believe what he can have no distinct Notion, no settled determined Idea of. But to shew the Weakness and Absurdity of this Distinction, thus understood, I will suppose some Body or other inclin'd to make the same Use of his Eye-sight, that the *Enthusiast* does of his Understanding; and in order to this, he distinguishes between Things contrary to his Eye-sight, and Things above or beyond his Eye-sight; and hereupon affirms, that tho' no Man can see a Thing that is contrary to Eye-sight, yet he both may and ought to see many Things which are above and beyond his Eye-sight, or out of Sight. Such an One, I imagine, must be allow'd to pass for a Visionary with a Witness; and I leave Those who are concerned, to determine what Difference there is betwixt believing what is above and beyond our Understanding, and seeing what is above and beyond our Eye-sight; or betwixt believing without Ideas, and seeing without Light or visible Objects.

3d. It is farther urged in Favour of this Enthusiastick Scheme, that there are infinite Things in Nature, which we cannot understand, which yet we cannot but believe. And here indeed it would be pleasant enough, if it was not for the Ill Consequences of it, to observe how egregiously some
 Learned

Learned Men delight to trifle and blunder upon this Subject ; they are sometimes extremely Modest with Regard to their Understandings, in Complement to their Faith ; they will frankly own, what indeed they make undeniably evident, that they understand but very little of the Nature and Reason of Things : But then, whatever they may want in Understanding, they abundantly make up in Believing. That there are infinite Things in Nature, which we do not understand, and which are wholly beyond our Comprehension, and above our Reason, I readily acknowledge ; but then, I affirm, that not One of those Infinite Things unknown, can be the Object of our Faith. I have frequently in Conversation urged these mysterious Believers, who think they have raised their Faith above their Understandings, to give me any one single Instance, express'd in any clear intelligible Proposition, of a Thing that they believe, and that they do not at the same Time understand ; and tho' one would think this but a reasonable Request from Those, who talk so much of believing above Reason, yet I could never prevail upon any One of Them to oblige me thus far ; and I am so well assured of these Mens Obstinacy in this Case, that I dare say, let who will beseech them, they will never do it.

I should not perhaps have thought any thing could farther have been urged in Favour of Implicit Faith, if you, Gentlemen, had not furnished us with a very remarkable Distinction to this Purpose : It is certainly no easy Matter

Matter to believe what one can't understand
 in any Sense at all, or form any distinct de-
 terminate Idea of ; but to help us out in
 this Case, You ' distinguish p. 40. between
 ' the Doctrines and Points proposed in
 ' Scripture to our Belief, and the Things
 ' themselves that are the Matter and Sub-
 ' ject of them. The Former you say may
 ' be known, and Ground sufficient seen for
 ' the Receiving of them; where our Rea-
 ' son, at least in this its weak and impaired
 ' State, can't reach the full, clear and ade-
 ' quate Understanding of the Latter. You
 ' add, that not attending unto this, may oc-
 ' casion Difficulties and Entanglement in
 ' the Thoughts, which otherwise would be
 ' prevented.' I would gladly receive any
 Assistance which might enable me to a-
 void Difficulties and Entanglement in my
 Thoughts ; but I must frankly own, that I
 am not able to perceive the Ground of
 this Distinction, or upon what Foundation
 in the Nature of Things you have made
 it ; and therefore I fear it is a Distinction
 without any Difference: For what I beseech
 you are the Doctrines and Points proposed
 in Scripture to our Belief, as distinct or
 abstracted from the Things themselves, that
 are the Matter and Subject of them? Is it
 possible to believe the Doctrines, without
 believing the Things contained in them;
 or can you understand the One in any De-
 gree or Measure, farther than you under-
 stand the Other also? What is it to believe
 the Doctrines, but to assent to the Truth
 of the Things that are the Subject Matter
 of

of those Doctrines? Or what is it to understand the One, but to understand the Other? 'Tis, I think, evident, that your Ideas must be the same, and of the same Nature in both Cases, clear or not clear, adequate or inadequate, alike; and when you can make out the contrary, I shall own that you have explain'd a Mystery, and shall expect greater Matters from you for the future: But in the mean while, if we must with you distinguish between the Doctrines and Points proposed in Scripture, and the Things themselves, that are the Matter and Subject of them, I think there is but one possible Way of doing it, and that is, by distinguishing between the Words of the Doctrines, or the bare verbal Propositions, and the Sense or Meaning of them; and then indeed, we may be sure that such Words, or bare verbal Propositions are written in Scripture, without troubling our Heads about the Meaning of them, or whether they stand for any thing, or were intended to convey any Ideas to our Minds or not; and this I must own, is a sound Foundation for implicit Faith, which can be built upon nothing but Sounds.

But notwithstanding your shifting off this Business, under a Pretence of your not having full, clear and adequate Ideas of the Things themselves, that are supposed to be the Subject Matter of the Doctrines revealed and proposed to our Belief, I doubt not but to make it appear, that in your Way you can have no Ideas at all of what you call the Things revealed; I say no Ide-

as at all, either full or not full, clear or not clear, adequate or inadequate; and this, I think, will be made out fully and clearly to every one's Capacity, by considering your great and main Proposition; in which you pretend to have given us the State of the Question, and in which, as I cannot but imagine you have added to the *Mysteriousness* of the *Athanasian-Creed*, you have left your selves accountable for some peculiar Absurdities and Contradictions of your own, which cannot be charged even upon *That*. Your main Proposition, in which you have laid down, as you think, a necessary Fundamental Article of Faith, and which you say you are ready earnestly to contend for, against all Opposers, is this, *viz.* ' That the Father, Son, and Holy ' Ghost, (conjunctly taken,) and not either ' of These alone, (or seperately considered) ' are the One only Living and True God, ' or the One Supreme Being, *p.* 19, 20, 21. This Proposition being what you have so strongly expressed, and so often repeated as a necessary Fundamental Article of the Christian Faith, I shall take the Liberty to make some Remarks upon it. And here, the first Thing I would observe concerning this Grand Proposition of your's, is, what you have frankly own'd, *viz.* that you mean nothing by it. I hope therefore, that from henceforth no Body will be so injurious to you, as to charge you with Understanding or Defending this Doctrine in a wrong Sense; since I doubt not but effectually to clear you from any such Imputation,

tion, by shewing, that you do not understand or defend it in any Sense at all. You say, *p. 20.* ' We further add, that tho' these Three are in the Scriptures distinguished from, and therefore not to be confounded with each other : Yet we have learnt nothing there, either of their being compounded or divided : Nor do we therefore undertake to shew explicitly, and in Particulars, how they are Three ; nor how, (tho' Three, yet) they are One.' Now, do but stand to this Principle, and do not pretend, as you say you will not, to determine in particular, how the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are Three, or in what Sense One ; and I dare undertake to shew, that *Sabellians, Tritheists, Arians, Socinians, Unitarians, Trinitarians, Realists, Modalists, Nominalists, Orthodox and Hereticks* of all Sorts and Denominations whatever, may all safely subscribe your Grand Article of Faith ; and without the least Prejudice to their particular and opposite Opinions, may all amicably unite in one common Jingle of Words, in one general indeterminate, and therefore insignificant Proposition. This is doubtless a safe and prudent Way of securing the Faith once delivered to the Saints, by laying down General Propositions of an implicit or no Meaning, and leaving every One at Liberty to understand them in his own particular explicit Sense. I hope therefore, if you should hereafter propose this or any such like Proposition, as a Test of Mens Christianity, that no Body will take you for Imposers,

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since you only offer them a general implicit Form of Words, which Men are to receive as a Blank, and affix what particular Sense to they please. What pity is it this innocent Design had not been more generally known at *Salter's Hall*; 'tis no Wonder that those who were let into the Secret, made no Scruple of declaring their Assent to a Set of Words, which had confessedly no Meaning at all, till every one for himself had tack'd his own particular Sense to them; for who would not be Orthodox at so cheap a Rate, as making the Words *Three* and *One* seem to chime so as to belong in some Sense or other to the same Thing?

If you cannot or will not determine in what Sense the true God is *One*, and in what Sense *Three*, then this, for any thing that you can or will determine to the contrary, may be true in either of the particular and opposite Senses, which commonly go under the Names of *Tritheism*, and *Sabellianism*. Thus in the *Tritheistick* Way the *Three* Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may be *Three* real Persons, *Three* individual Self-conscious Beings, *Three* distinct Selves, or intelligent Agents; and God may be *One*, not by a numerical but specifick Identity, of *Three* distinct real Persons or intelligent Agents agreeing in one common Nature, or Essence, one sort of Species; and thus the Words *God* and *Godhead* may be taken, not in an individual, but collective Sense, as a Senate, Council, or supreme Magistracy may be said to be *One*,
tho'

tho' it consists of many Individual Members, or distinct Persons, of the same Rank and Order, and acting in the same Capacity by a Joint-Exercise of the same Powers. Thus you see in the *Tritheistick* Way, God, or the Deity, may be One and Three in some Sense, One and Three in different Respects; and if you are resolved to continue thus in the dark, and will not limit the Matter to any particular Sense different from this, then it must be evident to every Body, that this *Tritheistick* Scheme may be the true Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, for any thing that you have determin'd to the contrary. Again, in the *Sabbellian* Scheme, the One true God, or the One Individual, Self-existent, first Cause, whose Unity consists in a numerical Identity of Being, or distinct particular Existence, may be represented and made known to us by Three distinct Names, or Characters, on the account of his having three relative Capacities or distinct Ways of acting with respect to us; as the rational Spirit in Man is sometimes called the *Mind*, when it is considered as a thinking, intelligent Being or Agent in general; sometimes the same rational Spirit is call'd the *Will*, when it is considered as exercising its active Power, Command, or Dominion, in altering or differently determining its own Thoughts and Ideas within its self, or the external Motions of the Body; and sometimes the same individual rational Spirit is called the *Soul*, when it is considered as animating and quickening the Body, and

constituting together with it the compound Being, or rather the Union of two distinct Beings, the Soul and Body, which we call the Man : And thus to apply this Instance in the *Sabellian* Scheme concerning the Trinity ; the One true God, or the One Individual, Self-existent first Cause, who is but One real Person, or One distinct, intelligent Agent, may yet be represented or made known to us under three distinct Names or Characters, on the Account of three different Capacities or Ways of acting towards us ; that is, this One true God, or One Self-existent first Cause, considered as the common Parent, the Author and Creator of all Things, may be call'd *the Father* ; but as he assumes the Humane Nature, and acts towards us in the Capacity of Mediator, he may be call'd *the Son* ; and thus again the same Individual, Self-existent first Cause, as he effectually operates upon the Souls of Men, in Conversion and Regeneration, may be call'd *the Spirit*, or *Holy Ghost* ; and in this Way the self same Natural Person, the same Numerical, Intelligent Being, or Agent, may be Three, or even Thirty, or Three Hundred Persons, in a Moral or Political Sense, with Regard to his different Capacities or Ways of acting towards others. Now, since you do not pretend to tell us in what Sense the Trinity or Unity are to be here understood, it may be understood either in the *Tritheistick* or *Sabellian* Sense, for any thing you determine to the contrary ; for it is evident that if you cannot tell us in what Sense the

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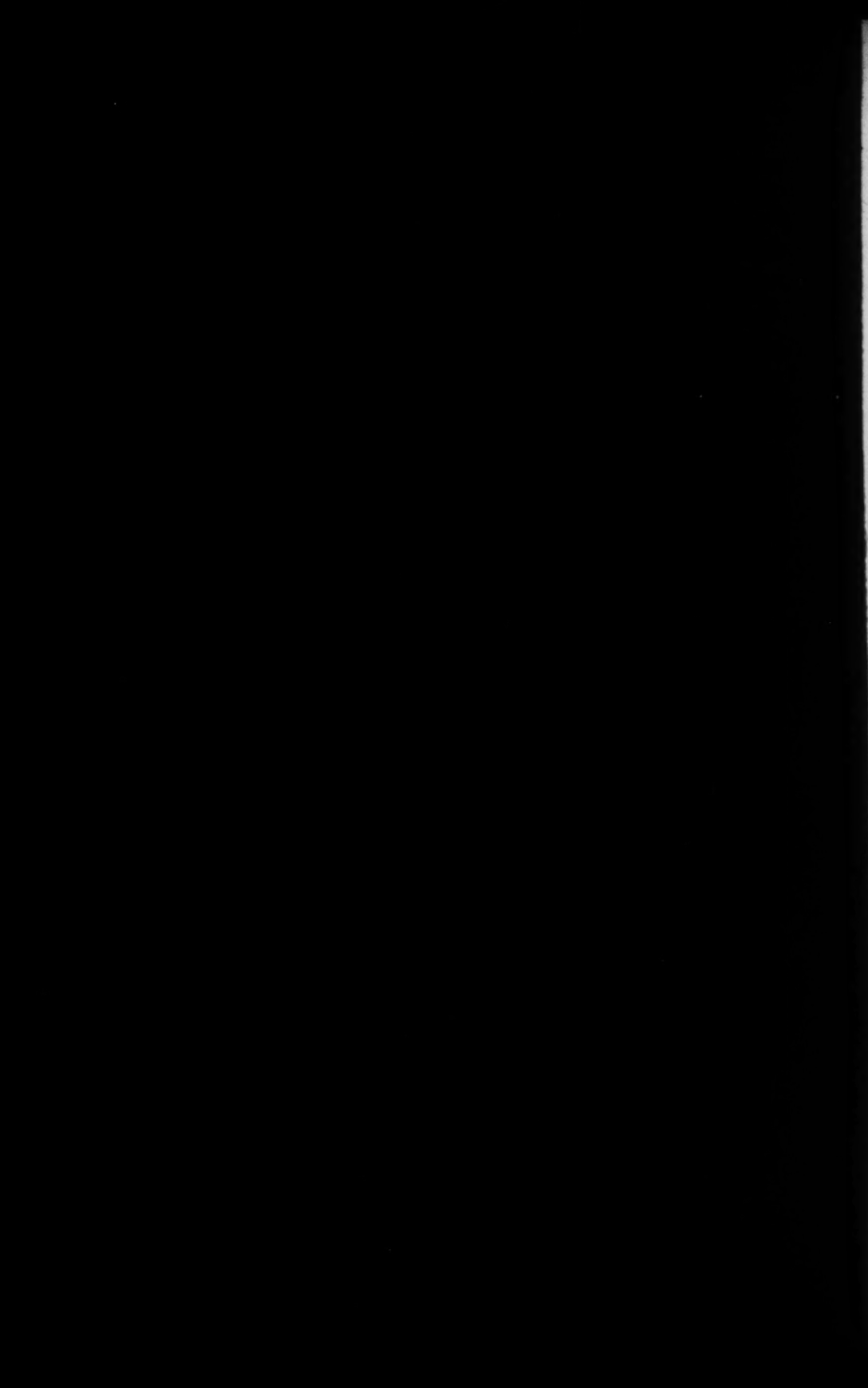
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are One, you cannot tell us in what Sense they are not Three; and if you cannot tell us in what Sense they are Three, you can neither tell us in what Sense they are not One; and therefore, according to you, they may be One and Three, either in the *Trisbeistick* or *Sabellian* Sense; and then, after all the Noise and Outcry you have made against your Brethren, as if they were apostatized from the Faith once delivered to the Saints, and after all the Zeal you have shewn, and the Pains you have taken to make your selves Orthodox, or rather to secure the Benefit and Reputation of Orthodoxy to your selves, by the fine Amusement of empty, insignificant Sounds, you cannot, or will not pretend to tell us whether you believe in Three Gods, or Three Infinite, Self-existent Beings, of one common Nature, Species, or Sort; or whether you believe only One God, or One Infinite, Self-existent Being, under Three different Capacities, Relations, or Ways of acting. And thus by the mere Magick of Words, which, by your own Confession, signify nothing, you have advanced your selves to be the Heads of a Party upon the Foundation of Implicit Faith. You ought doubtless to be own'd as leading Men among all those who can prostitute their Understandings low enough to believe, that you mean something when you can tell us nothing; and who are accordingly ready to yield a stupid and blind Obedience to your reverend and venerable Darkness.

I hope, as you have taken so much unreasonable and unnecessary Pains to clear your selves from *Arianism*, you will think your selves concern'd to say something to clear your selves from *Tritheism*, and to satisfy the World that your One true God in Nature, Essence, or Species, is not Three true Gods in Number, or Three Individual Self-existent Beings. When you have done this, I promise that your Scripture-Testimonies shall be very particularly and carefully considered, in order to determine how far the Scripture Account of the Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, can agree to that One Individual Being, who is the Supreme Independent first Cause of all Things. If you decline an open, free Declaration, such as may effectually exclude *Tritheism*, I shall leave the World to judge with what Justice you condemn others for not declaring themselves; and leave every Body at the same time to judge how notable a Test of Christianity your famous Proposition must be, *That the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are the One true God*; since for any thing you have said, or I believe dare say to the contrary, your One true God in Nature, may be Three true Gods in Number, or Three Infinite Independent Beings; and One only, as agreeing in one common abstract Essence, or Species, as all Mankind are One, as having one common rational Nature, or agreeing in one abstract Idea of Humanity.

I think it is very remarkable, with what Artifice you endeavour to evade declaring your

your selves upon this Point; and to keep the Reader in a Mist of Words, of a general indeterminate, and therefore of no Meaning. Page 8. you say, ' Now therefore that which upon this Foundation we assert, and are ready earnestly to contend for, against all Opposers, is, that there are Three, who do plainly bear distinct Names in Scripture, to wit, the Name of the Father, of the [Word, or] Son, and of the [Spirit, or] Holy Ghost. We say there are these Three, to whom we find the Scriptures do ascribe and attribute any thing, every thing, that is most peculiar and appropriated to the Divine Nature, without any Difference. The most peculiar Things, that do distinguish God from any, from every made or deriv'd Being, do not distinguish these [as to their Essence or Being] from each other.' I appeal to the whole World, whether all this general confused Talk may not equally be apply'd to the two most opposite and contradictory Schemes, *Tritheism* and *Sabellianism*; and whether your Three Names, or Three Things, or Three, you know not what, must not leave your whole Sense uncertain and indeterminate. There are Three Somewhats spoken of in Scripture, to each of whom, as you imagine, every thing is attributed that is most peculiar and appropriate to the Divine Nature; but whether these are three Names only, or three Things, three Relations of one and the same Being, or three distinct Beings, you cannot tell; however, for the more
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Safety, and that you may agree with Scripture at least in Sound, you will call these three Somewhats One God, whether you understand them as Three Gods, or One God, or whether you understand and believe any thing at all concerning them or not. For tho' you neither have nor can prove that Self-existence, Independency, or absolute Supremacy, is in Scripture attributed to the Son, or to the Holy Ghost, and tho' you are not able to prove that every Perfection which is communicable at all in any degree, is not actually communicable from all Eternity in an infinite degree, only with the Limitation of Dependency or derived Existence; I say, tho' you neither have nor can prove any thing of this, which if you cannot, must be sufficient to overthrow your whole Scheme, even granting the utmost that you can seem to prove concerning the Son and Holy Ghost; yet I shall not insist upon this at present, but here call upon you again to declare yourselves off or on, as to the *Tritheistick* Scheme, and whether in the Unity of your Divine Nature there are or are not included Three absolutely Supreme, Independent, Self-existent Beings? I hope, Gentlemen, you will not prevaricate here, but tell us sincerely and plainly, whether the Object of your Worship be that One Supreme Self-existent Being, whose numerical Identity and infinite Perfections are demonstrable from certain Principles of Reason, antecedent to any particular Revelation; whether, I say, this One Individual Supreme
Being



Being is the sole Object of your Worship ; or whether under the Names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, you worship Three such Beings. I think we have the more reason to call upon you to be satisfy'd in this Particular, because you not only assert, but lay a vast Stress upon it, that some People are suspected to differ from you in the very Object of Divine Worship. Now if the one supreme Being of absolute, infinite Perfection, who is the first Cause of all Things ; if this one supreme Being, I say, is the Object of your Worship, you then direct your Worship to the same Object with all other Christians, and the same Object precisely with even a *Socinian* or *Deist* : But if under the Names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, you worship Three such infinite, independent, supreme Beings, then I must own that you differ in the very Object of Worship from all Men, whether *Christians*, *Jews*, or *Mahometans*, that believe in, and worship but One God. Therefore since you have thought it expedient to bring this Controversy at this Time to a publick Hearing, and have been the Aggressors in it, I hope you will be ready to satisfy my self and others, as to this very material Point, which I have here laid before you, and in which I think Satisfaction is due from you to the Publick, in Point of Honour, and Justice ; and when you have declared your selves, as you certainly may do, directly and explicitly in this Particular, I shall then know what I have to do,

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and you shall not fail of hearing from me again in due time.

I have press'd this Point of *Tritheism* upon you the rather, because several Gentlemen, who have an high Reputation for *Orthodoxy*, have freely declared to me, (in Trust of Conversation, not express'd indeed, but I believe suppos'd, and who shall therefore be nameless,) that they thought the *Tritheistick* Scheme to be the most defensible upon a Scripture Foundation. I hope therefore, that you, who have thought it so necessary to clear your selves from a Suspicion of *Arianism*, will not suffer your selves to lie under a Suspicion of *Tritheism*, or the Belief and Worship of Three Gods; which is certainly a Principle demonstratively false, and directly contrary to all Religion, whether Natural or Reveal'd.

I cannot but observe one Peculiarity in your Grand Article of Faith, which seems to render it in a very extraordinary Manner absurd, and that is, your saying as you do, ' That Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, ' and not either of These alone, are the One ' only True God,' in which, I think you plainly contradict, not only your Selves, but all the Creed-Makers that have gone before you, or the goodly Show of Humane Authorities you have produced; for they generally agree that each Person distinctly, that is, the Father alone, the Son alone, the Holy Ghost alone, is true and proper God, tho' they will not have them to be
Three

Three Gods, but One God. However, the Creed-Makers ought not to be angry with you, because you contradict yourselves as much as you do them; you labour to prove that each Person distinctly, and the Son for Instance, has the Nature and all essential Attributes and Perfections of the One only True God; now if the Nature and Definition of the One True God agrees exactly to Each of these Three, then it is evident that Each of these Three must be the One True God, the same One True God that they are when considered conjunctly, or else there are more One True Gods than One; and indeed if you have declared any Thing as the Matter of your Faith, or proved any Thing, it is this, that there are Three One True Gods, or One Three True Gods. Perhaps you will say that you have been unavoidably led into this Way of talking by the Scriptures themselves, and therefore my Ridiculing your Account of the Matter, is in Effect to ridicule the Scripture. But I, who shall always think it necessary to distinguish between the Scripture it self, and your Opinion, or Sense of Scripture, may, I hope, be allowed to think but meanly of the One, while I maintain a very great Reverence and Veneration for the Other; if you will understand the Scripture in a contradictory impossible Sense, or not understand it all, I cannot help that; but then let not, I beseech you, the Mistakes of fallible peevish Men be fathered upon the Spirit of God. You ought not to conclude

that every Thing in Scripture must be wholly unintelligible, that cannot be understood upon your Principle, or that every Thing must be look'd upon as an unrevealed unsearchable Mystery, that will not stand right in your Scheme, or that does not lie open and visible in your Systems: I beseech you therefore, as you have any Regard to, or Concern for, the Peace of the Christian Church, or the Honour of the Christian Name and Profession, that you would not go about, by a rash intemperate Zeal, to terrify Men from questioning the Truth of your Explications, or the Authority of your Creed-Makers; such a Conduct in Papists, or perhaps in High-Churchmen, had not been very wonderful, but in Protestant Dissenters it is really surprising; and I cannot but stand amaz'd, and blush for you, that you are not ashamed of it your selves! For you labour with all the Artifice possible, to rake Men off from an impartial Enquiry into the Grounds and Reasons of what they are to believe, and to prejudice them in Favour of Humane Declarations and Decisions in Matters of Faith; you have imitated and justified Those, who have gone before you in the Presumption of affixing the Sanctions of eternal Life and Death, to the Declarations and Decisions of weak and fallible Men; and you have, with them, substituted your own uncertain contradictory Judgment and Opinion, in the Room of the certain Infallible Word of God; and therefore, if ever you intend more, upon any future Occasion,

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on, to hold up your Heads among Protestants, in Defence of Christian Liberty, and the Right of Private Judgment, you ought publickly to recant, and beg Pardon of God and the World for this scandalous Part of your Performance; in which, if I am able to discern any Thing, you have set up an Humane Judicature in Matters of Religion and Conscience, and advanced the Declarations and Decisions of Fallible Men; as a Test and Standard of Christianity and Divine Faith. If your Harmony of Confessions, and what you add upon them, are to be regarded, I do not see what farther Use we can have either for our Understandings or Bibles; for if an implicit Faith in You, and your Creed-Makers, is sufficient in a Matter which you judge of such Consequence, it must doubtless be sufficient in all other Matters of less Moment; and so we are come (in short) back again to the Place from whence we sat out, I mean to the Church of *Rome*.

I had some Thoughts of enlarging upon this Topick, but am happily eased of that Trouble by the Promise of an Able and Learned Friend, who will direct a Letter from the Press to that Gentleman in particular, who has introduc'd, exemplify'd, and adorned this Harmony of Humane Creeds, to be believ'd under the Penalty of Damnation, and who has thereby served in so remarkable a Way the Protestant Reformed Cause, by contributing his utmost Endeavours to discourage and put a Stop to any farther Enquiries, or Reformation in
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Doctrinals, by such Arts and Methods as must have effectually prevented any Reformation at all. I am sorry that any Protestant Dissenters should expose themselves to the Force of all the Arguments they have ever made use of against the Papists and High-Churchmen; and I cannot but pity the Gentleman who has honoured this Part of the Performance with his Name, if it be true what I have had suggested to me, that he has been unwarily drawn into this invidious Piece of Service, by Another, who tho' he had Artifice enough to desire such a Thing to be done, yet he had too little Courage, or too much Prudence, to engage in it himself; but however that be, I doubt not but Mr. *Smith* is as capable of Defending what he has done, as any Body else.

But after all this Ado about the Harmony and Consent of the Protestant Churches, and this artificial popular Appeal to Humane Authority, or to the Judgment of all Those, who are of your Mind, it is purely and solely your own Judgment, and nothing else, that you would have all Christians determined by, in Matters of Faith; it is your own Judgment in Opposition to Scripture, or any other different Judgment or Rule whatever, that you set up as the Test of Christianity, and the great Standard of Truth and Orthodoxy in Matters of Conscience and eternal Salvation; this is the unavoidable Consequence of your Scheme, when you declare it necessary to Salvation, that all Christians should have a
right

right Faith or Belief, with regard to every Thing that is Fundamental: By which in your Way you can mean only thus much, that it is necessary to Salvation for all Christians to believe what you think to be Right, and to receive and acknowledge every Thing as Fundamental, that is so in your Opinion or Judgment. This is your real Scheme, and what your general confus'd Talk, when it comes to signify any Thing, must necessarily terminate in; and to make this out beyond all reasonable Contradiction, I shall here premise Two Things;

First, That there is a necessary essential Difference or Distinction to be made between the Scripture it self and your Judgment or Opinion concerning it; for since the Scripture it self is supposed to be the certain Infallible Word of God, which cannot possibly be false, and since it must be also granted that your Judgment or Opinion in Matters of Faith is Fallible, and therefore uncertain, or such as may possibly be wrong, it is evident that the certain Infallible Word of God cannot be the same Thing, or the same Rule, with the uncertain Judgment of weak and fallible Men; and therefore every one ought to distinguish here, between the Scripture it self, and your Judgment or Sense of Scripture, who would not deceive and mislead himself, by taking a Fallible for an Infallible, and an uncertain for a certain Rule.

Secondly, I shall suppose that you have formed your Judgment in Matters of Faith,
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upon a strict, serious and impartial Examination of the Holy Scriptures themselves, and that you believe and hold what after such Examination appears to your Understandings to be most reasonable and agreeable to Scripture, without any Regard to the Judgment of others, or any Humane Authority whatever: This I suppose you must grant, and then it must be farther granted, that while you had the same Scripture Rule, the same Understanding and Faculties, and the same Degree of Light or Rational Evidence, you must have formed the same Judgment, tho' no Body else in the World should have been of your Mind ; and that till you can see some farther Ground from Reason and Scripture to alter your Opinion, you must continue to think as you do, tho' the whole Possessors of your Creed-Makers should change their Minds, and turn against you ; and therefore that you are not your selves, and consequently that others ought not to be at all influenced by them.

Seeing then there is an essential Difference betwixt your Judgment and Sense of Scripture, and the Scripture it self, the One being Certain and Infallible, and the Other Fallible and Uncertain ; and seeing also what you declare to be true and necessary, is that only which you think to be so, whether it be really so or not ; and which you must equally think to be true and necessary, whether any Body else in the World should agree with you herein or not : From hence, I think it is evident, even to a Demonstration,

tion; that you have changed the Rule of Faith even in Fundamentals, that you have substituted your own private Sense in the Room of Scripture, and advanced your own weak and fallible Judgment as the Test of Christianity, and the Rule and Standard of all Truth and Orthodoxy, in Matters of Conscience and Eternal Salvation.

You can have nothing to say here, but to insist positively in it, that you are in the Right, that your Judgment in this Case, is the same with Scripture, and that your Sense is the true Sense; but I must tell you that this is so only in your Judgment or Opinion, in which you may, as you must own after all, be mistaken; and there are other Men of undoubtedly equal Parts and Abilities, and of equal Honesty and Integrity in searching the Scriptures, who cannot be of your Mind in these Matters, and who yet, to any disinterested By-stander, must be thought at least as likely to be in the Right as your selves. Good God! to what an Height of Enthusiasm and Bigotry must Men be brought, before they can thus substitute their own private Judgment and Sense, express'd in their own Words, in the Place of Scripture it self; and then damn all that will not come into their Scheme, or that will not join with them in the same Jingle of unintelligible Sounds.

I beseech you, Gentlemen, nay, I conjure you, as you are Ministers of the Gospel, in the Name of your great Lord and Master, and as you expect to be judged by him, let us know by what Authority you have taken upon you to make new Fundamentals, or to

declare any thing as necessary to Salvation, which God by any Revelation to Mankind has never made so. If you could prove your implicit contradictory Proposition to be true, which is impossible, yet still while we have the Bible in our Hands, you could not give us the least Appearance or Shadow of a Proof that it is a Fundamental Truth, or necessary to Salvation; and what Antichristian Tyranny, what an Outrage of uncharitable Zeal then is it in you to deliver over great Numbers of your Fellow-Christians, who Believe in and Worship the same God, thro' the alone Mediation and Intercession of the same Lord Redeemer, and Only Begotten Son of God, depending upon the effectual Aid and Assistance of the same Blessed Spirit of God, in Hope of the same Glorious Immortality, thro' the same Sanctification of the Spirit and Holiness of Life; to deliver them over I say, notwithstanding all this, to the uncovenanted Mercy of God; which is generally but a softer Name for the Flames of an eternal Hell; and this merely for not knowing what they could not possibly know, or for not believing what they could see no Reason to believe. If your own eternal Salvation must depend upon the Truth of your Scheme, the Lord have Mercy upon you! But tho' I have sufficient Reason to conclude that you are under a Mistake in this Matter, yet I have more Charity than to think that your Error is damnable; I am perswaded that whatever Mistakes or Errors are consistent with a sincere Endeavour to know the Will of God, and to do it, are consistent with Holiness, and therefore with Salvation; and that

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God not only will not condemn a Man for an Error absolutely Invincible, but will also upon the gracious Terms of his Gospel Covenants by a general Repentance, thro' the Merits of Christ, be ready to pardon all such Mistakes and Errors as Men may fall into, not from any vicious, selfish Principle, or any wilful Opposition to the Truth, but from mere Humane Frailty, or such Weaknesses and Oversights as are common to the best of Men. This is certainly most agreeable to the Genius and Spirit of Christianity; a Principle every where recommended and enforced by the Gospel of Christ; and without such a Principle of Charity, and that Disposition and Conduct that must flow from it, and be influenced by it, I fear the most illuminated Dogmatizer of us all, would have reason to tremble under the Inspection of his omniscient Lord, and despair of his own Salvation. For my own part, I see Reason every Day more and more to thank God for the Blessing of such an Education as never led me into these Principles of Bigotry and Enthusiasm; but that I can worship the One true God, through the Merits and Mediation of his only-begotten Son, depending upon the effectual Aid and Assistance of the Holy Spirit, to lead me into all necessary Truth, and to guide me through the Snares and Temptations of this World in the Way of Peace and Holiness to the heavenly everlasting Kingdom, without thinking my self obliged to pronounce Damnation on one Side or the other, where Men appear equally honest and sincere, merely
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because they cannot agree about certain dark mysterious Points, which some weak Zealots may reckon of great Importance. In such Cases, it seldom happens but the confident, presuming, dogmatical Side are in the wrong; and whether they are right or wrong with regard to their Notions, they are certainly wrong in their Conduct, when they are so free with their Anathemas and Curses, as if God had entrusted them with the Keys of the Bottomless Pit, and withal given them a Commission to consign over those to everlasting Fire, who in the Judgment of the whole Impartial World must be look'd upon to be as intelligent and honest, as good Men and as good Christians, as themselves. For my own Part, I long for that Time, which I hope is not far off, when this Spirit of implicit Faith, and blind uncharitable Zeal, shall be exploded, and banish'd our Protestant Country; and when Sincerity on the one Hand, and the absolute Necessity of being actually in the right on the other, shall remain as the only distinguishing Principles of Papists and Protestants.

I have nothing more to add, but to declare that the Gentlemen in *London*, who subscribed the *Paper of Advices*, have no Hand in this Letter. I am not personally known to above five or six Ministers in and about *London*, and of those few I know nothing as to their Sentiments in these Matters, farther than they have declared themselves to the World, that some of them think the Scripture a sufficient Rule of Faith, and some think otherwise. But were all the Ministers in the Kingdom against me, I shall continue, as Occasion offers, to write and publish what I take to be just and reasonable upon this Subject; and shall think any temporal Interest of my own but a mean Sacrifice, if I can but contribute any thing towards the suppressing and discouraging the Popish Spirit of Infallibility, and implicit Faith, and promoting that necessary Truth, which is inseparably connected with Christian Peace, and Unity, upon the Foundation of Christian Charity. I am, Gentlemen,

Yours, &c.